



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 2, 1966

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NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 341

TO : The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Administrator of the Agency for International Development  
The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency  
The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
The Director of the United States Information Agency

SUBJECT: The Direction, Coordination and Supervision of Interdepartmental Activities Overseas.

To assist me in carrying out my responsibilities for the conduct of foreign affairs, I have assigned to the Secretary of State authority and responsibility to the full extent permitted by law for the overall direction, coordination and supervision of interdepartmental activities of the United States Government overseas. Such activities do not include those of United States military forces operating in the field where such forces are under the command of a United States area military commander and such other military activities as I elect as Commander in Chief to conduct through military channels. The Secretary of State will discharge this authority and responsibility primarily through the Under Secretary of State and the regional Assistant Secretaries of State, who will be assisted by interdepartmental groups of which they will be executive chairmen, i.e., with full powers of decision on all matters within their purview, unless a member who does not concur requests the referral of a matter to the decision of the next higher authority.

Activities which are internal to the execution and administration of the approved programs of a single department or agency and which are not of such a nature as to affect significantly the overall U. S. overseas program in a country or region are not considered to be interdepartmental matters in the meaning of this NSAM. If disagreement arises at any echelon

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over whether a matter is interdepartmental or not in the meaning of this NSAM, the procedure set forth herein will be invoked which permits a dis-senting department or agency to appeal from the decision of an executive chairman to the next higher authority.

1. The Senior Interdepartmental Group

To assist the Secretary of State in discharging his authority and responsibility for interdepartmental matters which cannot be dealt with adequately at lower levels or by present established procedures, including those of the Intelligence Community, the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) is established. The SIG shall consist of the Under Secretary of State, Executive Chairman, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the United States Information Agency, and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Representatives of other departments and agencies with responsibility for specific matters to be considered will attend on invitation by the Chairman.

The Senior Interdepartmental Group will assist the Secretary of State by:

- a. ensuring that important foreign policy problems requiring interdepartmental attention receive full, prompt and systematic consideration;
- b. dealing promptly with interdepartmental matters referred by the Assistant Secretaries of State or raised by any of its members, or, if such matters require higher level consideration, reporting them promptly to the Secretary of State for appropriate handling;
- c. assuring a proper selectivity of the areas and issues to which the United States Government applies its resources;
- d. carrying out the duties and responsibilities set forth in NSAM 124 and related subsequent NSAMs of the Special Group (counterinsurgency), which is hereby abolished; and
- e. conducting periodic surveys and checks to verify the adequacy and effectiveness of interdepartmental overseas programs and activities.

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The SIG will meet in the Department of State regularly and specially at the call of the Chairman. The Chairman will be supported by a full time staff of personnel furnished on his request by the departments and agencies represented on the SIG.

2. Interdepartmental Regional Groups

To assist the Assistant Secretaries of State, an Interdepartmental Regional Group (IRO) shall be established for each geographic region corresponding to the jurisdiction of the geographic bureaus in the Department of State. Each IRO shall be composed of the regional Assistant Secretary of State, Executive Chairman, and a designated representative from Defense, AID, CIA, the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, USIA and the White House or NSC staff. Representatives of other departments and agencies with responsibility for specific matters to be considered will attend on invitation by the Chairman. Meeting and staffing procedures will be patterned on the SIG.

The regional Assistant Secretaries, in their capacities as Executive Chairmen of the IROs, will assure the adequacy of United States policy for the countries in their region and of the plans, programs, resources and performance for implementing that policy. They will be particularly watchful for indications of subversive aggression directed at the overthrow of governments in the region which the United States has a cogent interest to maintain, and, when such matters require higher level consideration, will recommend appropriate measures to higher authority for dealing with emergent critical situations in their regions.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Draft Presidential NSAM on the Direction,  
Coordination and Supervision of Inter-  
departmental Activities Overseas

1. As understood by us, the referenced draft NSAM calls for the establishment of a senior interdepartmental group (SIG) and subordinate interdepartmental regional groups (IRG), both of which would be interagency in composition and under the control of the Secretary of State. The SIG absorbs the functions of the Special Group (Counterinsurgency) which is abolished by the draft NSAM.

2. We interpret the phrase in the first sentence of numbered paragraph one, "...authority and responsibility for interdepartmental matters which cannot be dealt with at lower levels or by present established procedures,..." to mean that the clandestine and covert operations of CIA conducted under the authority of the 303 Committee, National Security Council Directive No. 5, and National Security Council Action No. 5412/2 are excluded from the jurisdiction of the SIG/IRG structure. If it can be established that this is a correct interpretation of the text of the draft NSAM we would have no objection to the draft directive insofar as it may concern the Clandestine Services. We wish to note, however, that no matter how neat and rational this structure may appear, experience with similar formal organizational entities, such as the OCB, suggests that it may prove to be extremely time consuming for senior officials and may generate volumes of paper requiring extensive handling without commensurate return.

3. If, however, it turns out that the draft NSAM is intended to be so interpreted as to include the covert operational functions of CIA within the jurisdiction of the SIG/IRG complex, we strongly recommend against its acceptance on the grounds that this procedure would be insecure, cumbersome, unnecessarily time consuming and generally injurious to the achievement by clandestine and covert means of U. S. national security objectives.

Desmond FitzGerald  
Deputy Director for Plans

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